

Character

Characterization is the method an author uses to reveal or describe characters and their various personalities.

Direct Characterization

The narrator tells the reader about the characters. You can actually identify descriptions within the text.

The narrator or another character tells us what a person is like.

Example:

Julie was a tall woman and, at the age of 50, had clear smooth skin and a twinkle in her bright blue eyes. She had worked as a nurse at General Hospital for 20 years and always wore her white uniform with a pretty blue silk scarf wrapped around her neck. Her voice was soft and gentle and patients frequently heard her singing softly to herself as she went on her rounds. She was always polite and friendly.

Indirect Characterization

The author lets the character reveal himself by what the character says, does, or thinks within the story. It often involves the use of external details such as dress, mannerisms, movements, speech and speech patterns, and/or appearances.

Often, indirect characterization uses more internal details such as conveying the thoughts and feelings of a character.

Indirect characterization: requires the reader to look for clues that reveal a character's traits and motivations. To fully understand a character and a story, we should look at:

- What a character says
- What a character does (actions)
- What a character thinks
- What others say or think about the characters and how they react to them

Example:

He cornered the 7th grader at his locker. "How much money do you have, kid?" The cornered student simply looked away, trying to collect his books. "I SAID, how much MONEY do you have, kid," the boy repeated, this time yelling into the face of the 7th grader and knocking the books from his hand. When the boy still did not answer, he pushed him into the locker and bellowed, "Give me the money you have in your pocket, NOW!"

Characters can be flat, stock (or typed), or round.

A flat character is simple and easy to understand. If you can sum up characters with a phrase or two, they are probably a flat character.

Flat characters may be described in detail and be present throughout a story, but the reader tends to learn little about them.

Function: Advance the plot

Stock characters are similar to flat characters but they may not occupy as much space. The stock or typed character is a familiar stereotype often serving to aid the plot (the silent cowboy, a waiter, a secretary, and so forth).

Function: contribute to the setting/environment of the story. They assist both the plot and setting.

Round characters are complex. They are more like real people--often difficult to predict and figure out; therefore, they tend to interest us and command our attention more than flat characters.

Characters can be either static or dynamic, a static character is one who remains essentially the same from beginning to end.

A dynamic character undergoes change. In general, flat characters tend to be static and round characters tend to be dynamic.

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